

NEWS RELEASE

Vessel Stability in Commercial Fishing

Richmond, BC August 22, 2006: Between 1975 and 2005, 157 fishing vessels capsized and 66 workers' lives were lost according to WorkSafeBC and Transportation Safety Board data. Factors that can contribute to capsizing are poor vessel design, poor maintenance practices, vessel modifications, poor operating practices or a combination of these factors.

While it's possible the first one or two modifications may have only a small negative effect on vessel stability, over a number of years, the cumulative changes may result in a vessel that is quite different from the original design or purpose. A qualified naval architect can calculate the impact of the modifications on the vessels safety.

Operational decisions, such as using a heavier net, having a skiff aboard or towed, how much load is on board and how it is secured or the amount of freeboard all impact stability. Accurate, up-to-date data will assist the operator in making appropriate decisions.

As part of WorkSafeBC's high risk industry strategy the *Guideline on Fishing Vessel Stability* was developed so that owners, masters and crew on a commercial fish boat have a clear understanding of what documentation is required to prove that an up-to-date stability assessment has been completed.

The *Guideline*, developed in consultation with industry associations, includes an enhanced schedule of inspections of boats that have a high risk of capsizing. This includes: sister ships of vessels involved in previous stability incidents or those with similar construction features, vessels that have been modified (hull modification, changes to gear), or those vessels that operate in more than one fishery with unique configurations to accommodate different types of gear. The inspections focus on examining written instructions that enable the master and crew to make quick, accurate judgments and the ability of the vessel operator to demonstrate his knowledge of stability.

Fish Safe, Transport Canada and WorkSafeBC all recognize that on completion of the Fishing Vessel Stability Education program, owners, masters and crew will have acquired sufficient knowledge to take ownership of stability decisions on their vessels.

Gina Johansen, Fishing Industry Safety Coordinator with Fish Safe said, "Even fishermen with 50 years in the industry have found the practical, hands on learning refreshing and useful in the everyday course of their jobs."

Harvey Linton, WorkSafeBC's Industry and Labour Services Manager for General Industries and a former fisherman says, "It's critical for fishermen to have their already

considerable knowledge about their boats “topped up” with some theory and see working examples of what can happen when gear is moved or the vessel is modified in some way.”

Information about the Fishing Vessel Stability Education Program, available in Prince Rupert, Vancouver and Vancouver Island, is available at the Fish Safe office at 1 (604) 261-9700 or fishsafe@telus.net.

WorkSafeBC is an independent provincial statutory agency governed by a Board of Directors that serves nearly two million workers and about 184,000 employers. WorkSafeBC was born out of a compromise between B.C.'s workers and employers in 1917 where workers gave up the right to sue their employers and fellow workers for injuries on the job in return for a no-fault insurance program fully paid for by employers. The organization is committed to safe and healthy workplaces and to providing return-to-work rehabilitation and legislated compensation benefits.

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